

Press Release

Governor proclaims long-term care week

OLYMPIA, October 14, 1998: In an effort to help educate consumers about the value of long-term care insurance, Governor Gary Locke has proclaimed October 15 through 21 as Long-Term Care Insurance Awareness Week.

Gov. Locke's proclamation notes that Washington residents making long-range financial plans should investigate long-term care insurance due to increasing nursing home and other related costs.

Industry estimates show that long-term care costs, which currently average \$40,000 a year, are expected to increase to \$190,000 within 30 years. Those same estimates state that nearly half of all Americans will require nursing home care at some point in their lives, and nearly 72 percent will use home health care. Yet most medical plans do not cover long-term care, and the federal government won't pay for it until a person becomes impoverished.

In recognizing the need for long-term care insurance, the Washington State Legislature directed the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) to offer an optional product to state employees, retirees, and their parents. The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), which administers PEBB programs, began offering the new product to its enrollees this spring.

"Our first steps have been to educate those who are eligible for this program," said HCA Administrator Gary L. Christenson. "We are urging our enrollees to determine if long-term care insurance would be beneficial to them, and letting them know that they are free to purchase this product, as well as any other product offered in the state."

In his proclamation, Gov. Locke said the state is setting an example for other large employers by recognizing the importance of offering a long-term care insurance benefit to its employees and retirees.

Washington residents are urged to learn more about long-term care insurance by contacting their insurance agents, insurance carrier, employer, or through Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA), an independent arm of the Washington State Insurance Commissioner's Office.

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